

Doctor: Protect HIV/AIDS patients

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. The promotion of human rights is an essential part of the medical profession and efforts must be made to ensure that HIV/AIDS patients are not discriminated.

Kuala Lumpur Hospital Infectious Diseases Department consultant Dr Christopher Lee said efforts must be made to ensure that doctors uphold their professional ethics.

"We are trained to protect the confidentiality of all patients but this is so much more important when we deal with HIV/AIDS patients because of the stigmatisation," he said at the 3rd National Medico-Legal Conference yesterday.

Lee said that it is unfair for anyone to expect the society to give due consideration to the basic rights of a HIV/AIDS patient when some medical professionals continue to stigmatise them.

He said it is also sad to note that the very people who would benefit from consulting a medical professional quit seeking expert advice because of the negative atti-

tude of some members of the medical fraternity.

"There is still room for improvement even among professionals ... there are some of us who don't even wish to know more about HIV/AIDS for the fear of having to treat them," he said in his paper titled **HIV/AIDS and Human Rights: A Medical Perspective**.

Lee stressed the need for medical professionals to adhere to the principles of confidentiality as it is among the top priority of ethical medical practice.

Earlier, Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir spoke on, among other things, mandatory HIV testing and partner/spouse notification which need to be done in a more sensitive manner to ensure that the basic human rights of the HIV/AIDS patient is protected.

'She' said there are about 36.1 million people in the world who are infected with HIV/AIDS and some are not even aware of it.

Since it was first discovered, some 22 million people worldwide have died as a result of HIV/AIDS and the number is increasing, she said.

Marina also said the fundamental human rights of HIV/AIDS patients can be upheld by respecting that they too have the right to live, the right to proper health and recognising the rights of women with HIV/AIDS.